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NIGHT OF THE OWLS
NIGHTWING
THE NEW 52!
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"AS MUCH AS YOU BELIEVE IT'S YOUR CHOICE WHAT YOU CAN BECOME IN GOTHAM...
"...IT'S IMPORTANT TO REALIZE WHAT YOUR PLACE COULD HAVE BEEN.
"AND ALL THAT WAS SACRIFICED IN ORDER TO PROCURE THAT FUTURE.
"FOR MOST OF THE YEAR THAT I COURTED HER, I ONLY MET AMELIA'S FATHER IN PASSING.
"...AND AN IMPORTANT MAN SUCH AS BURTON CROWNE HAD LITTLE TIME TO SPEND INVOLVED IN HIS DAUGHTER'S AFFAIRS.
"OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS DEFINED BY WEEKS APART AS I TRAVELED ON THE ROAD WITH HALY'S CIRCUS...
I WONDER IF WE MIGHT TALK...
SIR?
"OR SO I THOUGHT."
A MOMENT, WILLIAM?
After witnessing the deaths of his parents as a boy, Dick Grayson was taken under Batman's wing, becoming Robin, the Boy Wonder. But when the Boy Wonder became a man, he shed the identity of Robin and branded himself as...
NIGHTWING

ARE YOU A FAN OF CHESS, WILLIAM? SUCH A PURE GAME, TWO SIDES AND TWO SIDES ONLY--LIGHT AND DARK... BLACK AND WHITE.
MUCH LIKE THIS CITY.
...ABOUT WHAT EXACTLY YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING WITH MY DAUGHTER.
I'M AFRAID I DON'T UNDERSTAND, MR. CROWNE...
THE WHITE PIECES, WHICH ALWAYS MOVE FIRST, ARE THE MOST POWERFUL. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO MATTER.
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PLAY CHESS, WILLIAM?
I... DON'T, SIR.
HM. OF COURSE YOU DON'T. WHICH IS EXACTLY MY POINT.
...AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CHANGE THAT.
YOU MAY HAVE PULLED YOURSELF OUT OF THE SLUMS, WILLIAM, BUT YOU'RE STILL LIVING IN FILTH.
A CITY OF LIGHT AND DARK HAS NO MIDDLE. IT NEVER HAS...
Owls... It all comes back to the Owls.

NIGHT OF THE OWLS. 8:22 PM...
GOTHAM CITY HALL.
The man in front of me is William Cobb--an assassin for the Court of Owls--a Talon...
...and also my great-grandfather.*
Last time I saw him was in the Batcave, pumped full of a cooling agent to keep his regenerative abilities in check.
If he's here now, it means Batman has lost the Batcave. Or--
No--don't think like that. Not now. Focus, Dick.
People are counting on you.
MAYOR HADY... DEPUTY MAYOR KAVANAUGH... DOES CITY HALL HAVE A PANIC ROOM?
*AS REVEALED IN NIGHTWING #7. --B.C.
I DON'T...I'M NOT...
THE FOURTH FLOOR--THERE'S A VAULT!
GO LOCK YOURSELVES INSIDE--
--AND DON'T OPEN IT FOR ANYONE!

RICHARD GRAYSON--THE GREAT BETRAYER OF GOTHAM'S HERITAGE.
MY BLOOD.
MY HEIR.
SUCH A WASTE.
GUESS... -EHNN- WE'LL HAVE TO AGREE... -EHNN- TO DISAGREE THERE.
THEN SHOW ME, RICHARD--SHOW ME WHAT YOU'VE BECOME.
IMPRESS ME.
SCHK
KSSSH
POOM
THUNK

CRAASH
ARGH!

UGH!
THUD
BROKEN BONES...
SKRAK
...FOR SOMEONE...
KA-KRAK
...WHO REGENERATES?
KRAKKK
I SAID...
POP POP
...IMPRESS ME.
"THOUGH WE TRIED TO PUT THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER..."

"...BURTON'S DISAPPROVAL WEIGHED HEAVY ON OUR RELATIONSHIP.
"IT BECAME WORSE WHEN AMELIA DISCOVERED SHE WAS PREGNANT.
"HER FATHER FORBADE US FROM BEING TOGETHER, WHICH MEANT MY LOVE HAD A CHOICE TO MAKE.
"ALTHOUGH I SUPPOSE IT WAS NEVER REALLY A CHOICE AT ALL."
IT WILL BE OKAY, MY DEAR...IT WILL ALL BE OKAY...
"EVERY TIE BETWEEN AMELIA AND MYSELF WAS SEVERED.
"BURTON ARRANGED FOR HER TO MARRY A SECOND COUSIN, HIDING THE TRUE IDENTITY OF OUR SON.
"FOR ALL THE CITY WOULD EVER KNOW, THE CHILD WOULD BE A CROWNE.
"AS HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.
"I HAD STARTED AS NOTHING, AND IN THE EYES OF THOSE WHO MATTERED, WOULD ALWAYS BE NOTHING.
"NO MATTER WHAT.
"THAT WAS GOTHAM CITY."

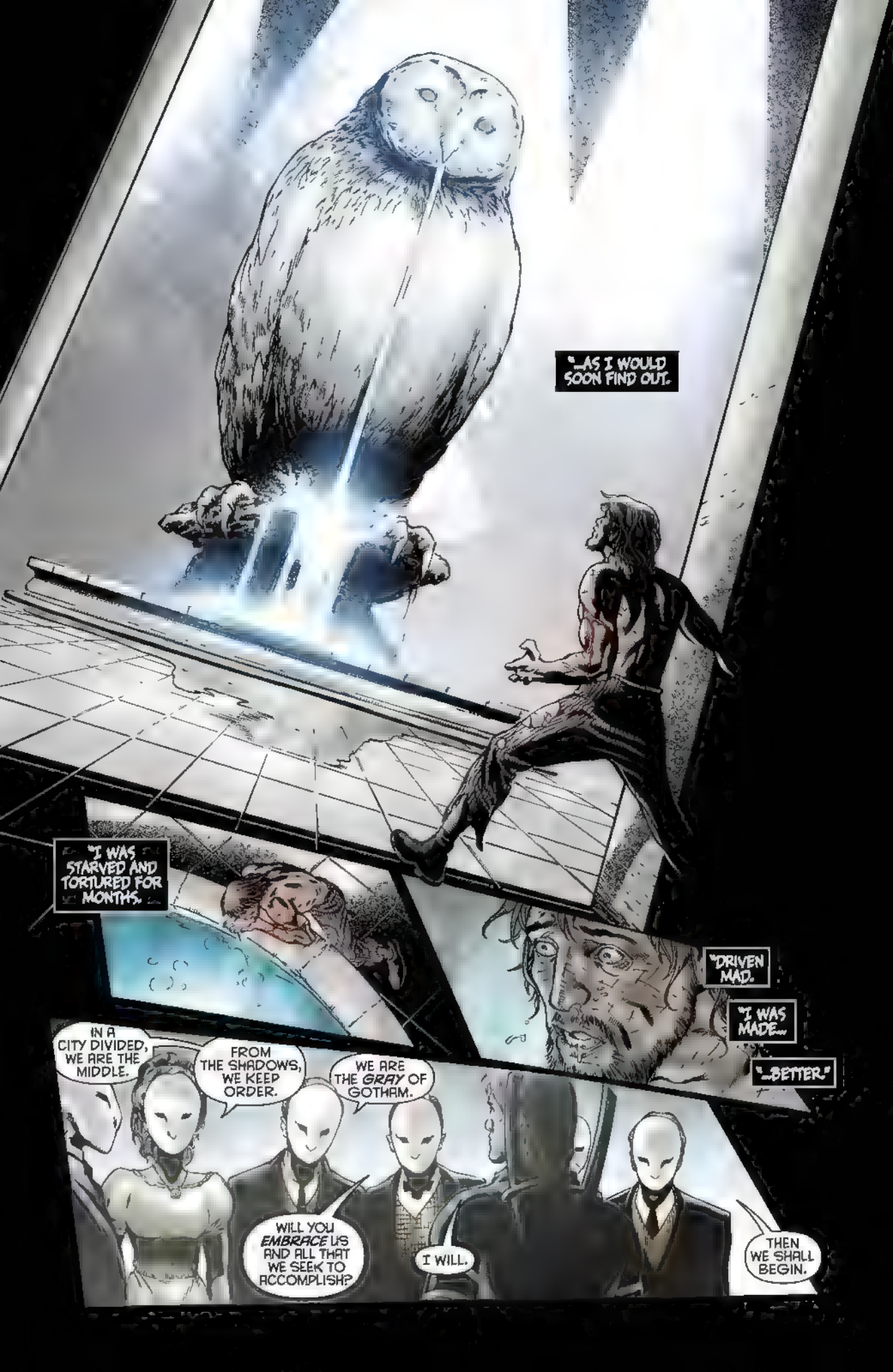
THERE IS A REASON THE COURT WOKE ME FIRST, YOU KNOW.
A REASON THEY TRUST ME.
I AM THE BEST, RICHARD--THE GREATEST TALON OF THEM ALL.
AND LAST I CHECKED, BATMAN *BEAT* YOU AND PUT YOU ON *ICE*. SO WHAT'S THAT SAY ABOUT--
ARGH!
YES--I RATHER ENJOYED MY TIME IN HIS LITTLE "CAVE." TELL ME--
--DID IT HURT WHEN HE HIT YOU? WHEN HE REJECTED YOU?
YOU COULD *SEE* US...?

OF COURSE I COULD SEE YOU.
JUST AS I COULD SEE ALL THE LITTLE TOYS YOU BOTH THINK ALLOW YOU TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN GOTHAM.
ALL THE GADGETS AND COSTUMES YOU DELUDE YOURSELVES WITH.
BUT MOST OF ALL, I COULD SEE WHAT YOU'VE BECOME, RICHARD--A SECOND RATE IMITATION OF A NAÏVE MAN.
IT'S PATHETIC FOR A GRAYSON.
He's not going to stop until he kills me.
BOOM
TELL YOU WHAT--WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME--
HRK!
--WHAT YOU SEE FROM UP THERE?
Even at full strength I don't know if I could beat him like this.
And I've lost a lot of blood...
...from that other Talon attack...

need to regroup.
Before I...
...before...
IS THAT IT THEN, RICHARD? IS THAT TRULY ALL YOU ARE?

EXIT
AS MUCH AS YOU BELIEVE IT'S YOUR CHOICE WHAT YOU CAN BECOME IN GOTHAM...
HNNN...
...IT'S IMPORTANT TO REALIZE WHAT YOUR PLACE COULD HAVE BEEN.
AND ALL THAT WAS SACRIFICED IN ORDER TO PROCURE THAT FUTURE WHICH YOU REJECTED.

YOU LOVED HER, DIDN'T YOU, WILLIAM?
IT DOESN'T MATTER, NATHANIEL.
NOT IN A PLACE LIKE GOTHAM.
YOU KNOW...IT DOESN'T *HAVE* TO BE THAT WAY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU...I HAD A WAY FOR YOU TO *CHANGE* THIS CITY? FOREVER. WHAT IF I TOLD YOU...
...I HAD A WAY FOR YOU TO *TRULY MATTER?*
"BUT IT WAS FAR FROM SIMPLE..."


"...AS I WOULD SOON FIND OUT.
"I WAS STARVED AND TORTURED FOR MONTHS.
"DRIVEN MAD.
"I WAS MADE...
"...BETTER."
IN A CITY DIVIDED, WE ARE THE MIDDLE.
FROM THE SHADOWS, WE KEEP ORDER.
WE ARE THE *GRAY* OF GOTHAM.
WILL YOU *EMBRACE* US AND ALL THAT WE SEEK TO ACCOMPLISH?
I WILL.
THEN WE SHALL BEGIN.

"THE FIRST YEAR WAS LIBERATING.
"I WAS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THIS CITY THE ONLY WAY ONE CAN. THE ONLY WAY THAT WORKS.
"I HAD FOUND MY TRUE PLACE IN GOTHAM.
"I WAS SHAPING THE FUTURE.
"BUT EVEN THEN I KNEW...THE OWLS WOULD REQUIRE MORE, ESPECIALLY ONCE I WAS GONE."
"THEY WOULD NEED A WAY TO CONTINUE SHAPING THE FUTURE."

"AND WHAT BETTER WAY TO DO IT...
"...THAN WITH A TRUE GRAY OF THE CITY?
RAISE HIM WITH HALY IN SECRET, NATHANIEL... PREPARE HIM FOR THE LEGACY.
MY SON. THE GRAY SON OF GOTHAM.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT YOU COULD HAVE BECOME, RICHARD? THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT YOU'VE BETRAYED?
IT'S NOT SIMPLY THAT YOU WERE CHOSEN BY THE COURT TO HELP SAVE GOTHAM... IT'S THAT YOU WERE BRED FOR IT.
SHRIIP
BUT WHAT YOU DO NOW...NONE OF IT MATTERS. NONE OF IT WORKS. YOU'RE JUST ONE MORE PERSON WHO THINKS THEY CAN BELONG, BUT WILL NEVER RISE HIGHER THAN "SECOND BEST."
UGH!
GOTHAM IS A CITY OF BIRDS--A CITY OF OWLS. WITHOUT US, NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE. AND YOU? YOU'LL NEVER BE MORE THAN AN IMITATION WAYNE...AND A KNOCKOFF BAT.
BUT WITH US, RICHARD? WELL...
...YOU COULD BE THE GREATEST BIRD OF ALL.
YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT GOTHAM NOT CHANGING, WILLIAM... IT *DOES* CHANGE.
TAKE THIS SUBWAY, FOR EXAMPLE. AS THE CITY BECAME MORE MODERN...THE POWER COMPANIES NEEDED A WAY TO INSULATE THEIR CABLES.
SO THEY STARTED PACKING THE LINES WITH *LIQUID NITROGEN.* WHICH IS WHY I *BROUGHT* YOU DOWN HERE.
Exit
BECAUSE TALON'S DON'T LIKE THE *COLD.*

SWIT
SWIT
SWIT
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
SLWOOOOM

TR-TRIVIAL... SO... TRIVIAL...
-=KOFF KOFF=-
YOU CAN'T... ESCAPE... WHAT YOU ARE...
...TAKE YOUR PLACE HERE, RICHARD... EMBRACE IT...
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I EMBRACE, WILLIAM. WHAT I EMBRACE...

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NEXT ISSUE:
THE TOMORROW PEOPLE

KYLE HIGGINS JOE BENNETT

DEATH STROKE™

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THE NEW 52

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NAHGA EMPIRE